

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



OFFICE ON LATINO AFFAIRS

ANNUAL REPORT – FISCAL YEAR 2005
Executive Summary

Submitted by: Gustavo Velasquez, Director

I. Introduction

The mission of the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs (OLA) is to improve the quality of life of the District's Latino population by providing community-based grants, establishing community relations and partnerships, and advocating to improve the quality of and access to government programs and services by Latinos(as) and Spanish-speaking residents. Our work is concentrated in five primary areas: health, education, housing, economic development and employment services.

OLA's role and work are critical to the infrastructure of the District Government as the Latino community –the largest and fastest growing ethnic group in Washington, D.C. and metro area, still faces many challenges to achieving optimal standards of living and knowledge of opportunities. The challenges include, but are not limited to the lack of government information and deficiencies in the design of programs and services that should effectively address the linguistic and cultural needs of many Latino immigrants. The Mayor, Council and District government entities continue to rely on OLA's expertise to understand the challenges of this community, and consult with us to better serve our constituency.

During the past year Mayor Anthony A. Williams has initiated, promoted and/or enhanced multiple government initiatives aimed at reducing disparities affecting the Latino community, including the availability of more bilingual information and resources, literacy opportunities, affordable housing, job training, and health improvement policies. Mayor Williams has also ensured that OLA's budget is maintained at funding level, approved new initiatives proposed by OLA, praised the work of OLA and all of its community partners and collaborators, and stand on a national position of influence to advocate for an inclusive agenda that benefits Latinos(as) in the District and across the country.

Below are brief overviews of each of OLA's four programs: Community Grants and Capacity Building; Outreach, Advocacy and Community Relations; Language Access and Policy Development; and Agency Management. Following the overviews is a summary of OLA's activities and accomplishments in fiscal year 2005 by mission area: health, education, housing, economic development and employment.

II. Community Grants and Capacity Building

OLA awards grants to Latino-serving, community-based organizations in accordance with our mission. The grants program also offers technical assistance to prospective and current grantees, and collaborates with OLA's other programs as consultant and conduit to District-based non-profit organizations and their customers/clients.

In fiscal year 2005, under the directive of Mayor Williams, OLA continued to implement last year's restructuring plan by placing a strong emphasis on performance-based grant awards to ensure the most efficacious use of public funds. To this effect, OLA requires grantees to document not only their proposed and delivered outputs (activities and results) but also their outcomes (demonstrated improvement in the conditions of people's lives). Organizations that receive funding from OLA collect data which detail how their program has led to changes in its participants' skills, attitudes and behavior, well being, and/or in status. For example, did the ESL program lead to increased English capacity that improved the individual's or family's access to employment or services? Did the after-school program have an impact on decreasing Latino student drop-out rates? This information allows an organization to show the strengths and challenges of its programs, and leverage financing from other sources (e.g., private foundations). The data reported by grantees help OLA track progress made in these areas, and identify the changing needs of the community while building stronger alliances with community partners.

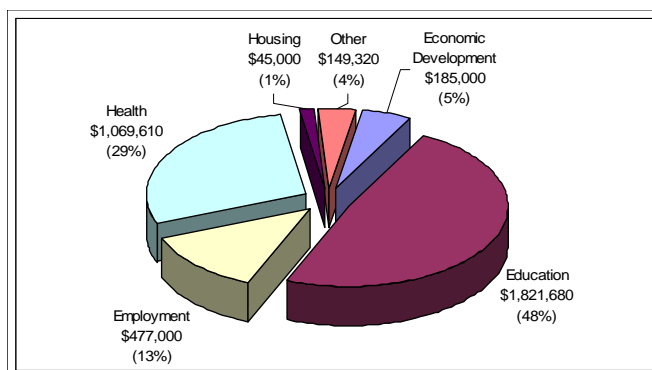
During 2005 OLA awarded 19 grants and renewed an additional ten, committing \$3,382,610 in grant awards. During the course of the fiscal year, OLA awarded another \$107,000 among four organizations, and with the backing of Mayor Williams and support from the Council, OLA finished the year by securing an additional \$258,000, which enabled funding for nine valuable community projects. By the closing of fiscal year 2005, OLA distributed a total of \$3,747,610 and administered 42 grant agreements. These programs served over 27,000 residents.

Mission Area	Number of constituents served by OLA funding (est. FY2005)
Economic Development*	553
Education*	2,472
Employment*	1,409
Health**	22,798
Housing***	N.A.
TOTAL	27,232

* Direct constituent services

** Outreach/information **and** direct constituent services

*** Funding for direct services was first awarded in October 2005. No data is yet available.



* Other includes cultural and artistic programs

III. Outreach, Advocacy and Community Relations

This program continues to establish partnerships with community based organizations and works within neighborhoods with a high concentration of Latino residents to deliver information on District programs and services; and directly connects constituents with those programs.

This year the Outreach team participated in the development of OLA's *Guía de Servicios: Washington a su alcance* (Guide to Services: Washington within Reach) a unique outreach tool, developed and produced entirely in Spanish. OLA's linguistic and cultural expertise was vital to producing a high quality guide in Spanish targeted to the District of Columbia's Latino community. The guide contains information on programs and services that are vital for Latinos living and working in the District. OLA made sure the *Guía de Servicios* included contact information and descriptions of the majority of District Government departments, agencies and programs, not only those covered by the Language Access Act, but also those that are indispensable to the Latino community.



The Outreach team worked arduously to distribute the *Guía* to community based organizations and at events, and to train frontline workers and carefully inform constituents on how to use this informative tool. To date, OLA has distributed over 6,600 guides at 19 community events, nine public and charter schools, and 25 community based organizations. OLA's Language Access Coordinator also worked closely with the Office of Human Rights to publish 2,000 additional copies of the *Guía*, that will be distributed by the 22 District Government entities covered in the Language Access Act to their Latino clients. OLA had the content of the *Guía* uploaded on OLA's web site (www.ola.dc.gov) to have the information available at a user's fingertips.

The Outreach team's expertise and engagement with the Latino community allow OLA to remain informed about the changing and complex needs of our community. Staff pays close attention to issues surfacing in the community and reports their findings to the Mayor and to the rest of the office. The Outreach team members contribute their expertise and knowledge to the collaborations between Neighborhood Services Core Teams and other government agencies to address and resolve pressing and immediate issues.

Additionally, the Outreach team attends and partners in community events. In fiscal year 2005, the Outreach Program partnered or sponsored ten events with the participation of approximately 800 Latino residents. OLA also participated as exhibitors in eight additional events/fairs. Examples of past events include:

- **Latino Public Safety Forum:** On June 29, OLA partnered with DC Superior Court, Office of the Attorney General, the US Attorney's Office, and Ayuda, Inc., in an informational session for 50 nonprofit organization and government service agency representatives.
- **Second Annual OLA Family Fair:** A total of 119 organizations – 64 nonprofits, 45 government agencies, and 10 corporate entities – registered for OLA's Latino Family Fair held on August 17. Agency participation tripled since the fair in 2004, especially that of government entities. Over 500 residents attended the fair.
- **DC Healthy Families (Ward 1):** On September 24, OLA partnered with DC Healthy Families, Amerigroup, the Boys and Girls Club, and the Department of Parks and Recreation, in a healthy life style fair for families. The fair played a key role in providing parents with information and registration for health insurance programs. Approximately 450 residents attended the fair.

IV. Language Access and Policy Development

Under the guidance of this program, OLA completed the transition from overseeing the Mayor's Limited English Proficient (LEP) Initiative for Spanish speakers to cooperating with the Language Access Act and its oversight agency, the DC Office of Human Rights. The Act was signed into law by Mayor Williams in April of 2004.

OLA provides technical and Spanish-language assistance to District government agencies covered under the Language Access Act, so that Latino constituents gain equal access to District of Columbia government services and information. During fiscal year 2005, the Language Access and Policy Development program provided system-wide and targeted language access support – in terms of translations, workshops and detailed consultations- to the Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Employment Services, Metropolitan Police Department, DC Public Schools, Office of Planning, Fire and Emergency Medical Services, Office of Human Rights, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Mental Health, Department of Motor Vehicles, Child and Family Services Agency, Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration, and Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. These departments fall under phases 1 and 2 of the Language Access Act.

OLA has fulfilled the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed in September 2004 with the Office of Human Rights and the Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs. This MOU, which is in the process of being renewed in fiscal year 2006, delineates how OLA serves as a collaborative and consultative body to the DC Language Access Program. An essential part of this work by OLA is the sampling of Spanish translations of English vital documents. As a result, OLA has found Spanish translations ordered by DC government in 2005 to be of good quality in the majority of sampled cases.

OLA reviewed, translated or created more than 200 Spanish documents from entities under the Language Access Act this year alone. This means that OLA has either translated an English original into Spanish or proofread the Spanish language versions of vital documents from the majority of DC agencies under the Act. OLA also translated materials for agencies outside the purview of the Act, but which directly address the well being of the community, such as for the DC Office of Energy, Department of Transportation, DC Emergency Management Agency, and the Office of the City Administrator. OLA provided to each covered agency a folder with materials addressing methods of data collection and outreach, as well as demographic and cultural explanations of the Latino community. At meetings and during individual consultations OLA's Language Access Coordinator and Translator distributed and explained detailed Translation Brief and Translation Request Form templates to guide agency representatives on how to work with translation vendors.

The Language Access and Policy Development Program continues to address matters of employment by participating in the DC Workforce Investment Council (DCWIC). The program also represents OLA on the Latino Advisory Council of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD), which works on improving relations between the Latino community and the police. This program has also assisted the DC Housing Authority in promoting housing choice through the Linguistically Isolated Tenant Based Housing Choice Voucher Program in partnership with the Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs.

Finally, OLA advocated for the continuity of telephonic interpretation contracts for essential DC services. As a result, the vast majority of the Language Access Act's covered agencies currently have the service (e.g. Language Line), particularly those of phases 1 and 2.

V. Agency Management

This program enabled OLA to achieve progress and success with regards to administrative procedures and statutory mandates with which OLA must comply. During fiscal year 2005, OLA made significant progress in the area of customer service. Overall, the agency was rated above average with respect to the total number of agencies tested in District government. In the area of contracting and procurement, OLA successfully secured quality services and purchases while complying with all the necessary regulations. In this area, OLA was able to spend more than 100% over its target budget in products and services provided by Local, Small and Disadvantage Business Enterprises (LSDBEs). Agencies must comply by law with at least 50% of their target budgets from District's LSDBEs. The process to hire and evaluated OLA personnel was expedited this year, and turnover has become now a rarity instead of the norm. The financial management of the organization became more efficient while the agency successfully met its scorecard measures stipulated by the Office of Performance Management.

VI. OLA ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS BY MISSION AREAS

HEALTH

OLA's Latino Family Fair brought together 38 health and social service agencies to provide health screenings, immunizations, informational materials and bags of food. OLA invested a total of \$1,069,610 in eight community health programs such as Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Health, Neighbors' Consejo, La Clínica del Pueblo, EOFULA (Educational Organization for United Latin Americans), and the Latin American Youth Center. Funding for these programs was secured from local appropriations, as well as from valuable partnerships with the Department of Health's Addition, Prevention and Recovery Administration and the Department of Human Services' Income Maintenance Administration. These programs offer health education, screenings and check-ups for adults and youth, disease prevention and immunization, maternal and child health, substance abuse prevention and treatment, public benefit education and enrollment, and health-related interpretation services. Health-related funding served more than 8,000 individuals from every age group, in particular many uninsured Latinos(as).

OLA funded, sponsored or participated in at least six events solely dedicated to health services, among them the DC Healthy Families Health Fair in Wards 1 and 4, National No Alcohol Day, and the DC Asthma Coalition Fair. The events provided families with opportunities to receive health information; immunizations; HIV counseling and testing; cholesterol and diabetes prevention; vision, hearing and dental exams; and registration for health insurance. OLA worked with Neighbors' Consejo in improving the delivery of linguistically and culturally competent services at the Department of Health's Detox unit and other subdivisions. Moreover, Neighbors' Consejo conducted outreach to bring homeless individuals into substance abuse treatment programs in coordination with OLA.

Staff have represented OLA in meetings and provided technical assistance to such groups as the Fatherhood Program, Department of Health's substance abuse outreach strategies, DC Tobacco Control Program, and the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect Taskforce. OLA funded the promotion and operational costs for the DC Festival (Fiesta DC), where the Department of Health joined OLA at our tent to perform outreach on several of its programs.

OLA's Language Access and Policy Development program circulated the announcement of the Council on Latino Agencies' "State of Latino Health in DC" report among the network of the Language Access Act, as well as news on the Department of Mental Health's Annual Mental Health Conference. To assist the Department of Health and the Income Maintenance

Administration of the Department of Human Services comply with the Language Access Act, OLA provided over 30 translations into Spanish of materials related to health.

EDUCATION

One of OLA's main contributions to education in the District of Columbia this fiscal year has centered on strengthening existing programs in the Latino community. Forty-eight percent of OLA's total grant funding was invested in 15 organizations which deliver services in youth violence prevention initiatives, family literacy, English language instruction, mentoring and tutoring, and youth literacy through the arts. These programs serve children and youth, adults, and families—many of whom are recent immigrants—by helping them gain knowledge and skills as they look for better jobs, raise their families, and become integrated into American society.

Approximately 21.9% (\$400,000) of the education grant funds were awarded to the Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative for the suppression of gang violence. This program works in concert with a network of partner agencies, offering structured educational activities to students throughout the school year. Another \$400,000 (21.9%) was employed during the summer through the PRO-Urban program to complement the school year activities. PRO-Urban provides youth with summer employment and continues to offer structured activities. These two programs have successfully prevented gang-related youth violence in Ward 1 since the fall of 2003 by consistently maintaining a strong presence in the community and offering positive and engaging activities that give DC youth a constructive alternative to joining gangs.

Approximately 42.6% (\$777,000) of the education funds were invested among the Latin American Youth Center, Latino Student Fund, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Barbara Chambers Children's Center, GALA Hispanic Theater, Young Playwrights' Theater, and Bell Multicultural High School's School of Music for the delivery of educational programs to District of Columbia Latino youth. These programs delivered a range of services including, but not limited to, after school and weekend academic tutoring and mentoring, college preparation, GED preparation, substance abuse prevention education, music instruction, and visual and performing arts education with a focus on reading, writing and comprehension.

CentroNía and Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Health's Even Start program received a total of \$103,000 to deliver English language and computer skills instruction for adults. In addition they provided parenting classes and information on how to navigate the local school system, while their children received tutoring and additional academic support. The Central American Resource Center (CARECEN), the SED Center and the Council of Latino Agencies received \$132,980 to carry out projects which included instruction in the English language, and courses on civic engagement and preparation for citizenship.

With regards to the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), a major task of OLA's staff has been to inform the Executive Office of the Mayor, the Office on Bilingual Education and the Office of Human Rights on issues of alleged discrimination Latino families have suffered. Examples include requiring a Social Security number from students during registration, gang activity and violence in school, and allegations of school administrators and teachers prohibiting the use of Spanish in school. OLA arranged a meeting between the Mayor's Latino Commission and DCPS Superintendent Clifford Janey to address and seek resolution for these concerns. So far, discussions between the Superintendent, the Latino Commission, community advocates and Latino parents have led to a number of commitments and deliverables by DCPS, including the investigation of allegations, the reinforcement of policies, and the hiring of more bilingual staff.

On a different occasion, OLA brought Latino media to Superintendent Janey's "Forging New Alliances", a breakfast meeting sponsored by the Council of Latino Agencies. DCPS, OLA, and Latino Art Beat organized an arts competition for DC high school students to celebrate Latino heritage, which now takes place yearly. Students competed for college scholarships sponsored by Latino Art Beat, and funded by General Motors. Will Schneider-White from the Duke Ellington School of the Arts won first place with "Portrait of Maria" (\$3000); Yimy Sanchez from Bell Multicultural High School won second place with "The Roots of my People" (\$1500); and Gloria Lopez from Duke Ellington School of the Arts won third place with "Dancing Woman" (\$500).

OLA's Outreach team and Translator worked with the State Education Office (SEO) to provide technical assistance on effective ways to conduct outreach to the Latino community for their college tuition assistance and the Mayor's School Scholarship program for low-income families. Outreach also recruited two additional sites for SEO's Summer Food Program. OLA collaborated with DCPS and a number of agencies, including Multicultural Community Service and Columbia Heights/Shaw Family Support Collaborative, to inform Latino parents and students about educational opportunities and to address Latino parents' concerns. The Outreach team partnered with DC Learns and DC Parent Smart to recruit parents and families into literacy and parent advocacy programs. OLA provided translation and interpretation services to the State Education Office and translation and editing services to DC Public Libraries and the Department of Parks and Recreation for their Pre-K and other educational programs.

Lastly, OLA provided material it has gathered on student enrollment for Limited English Learners (LELs) in DCPS and information about DCPS' Newcomer Program with its wide network of Language Access Coordinators and community-based organizations.

HOUSING

In fiscal year 2005, OLA funded a project by Housing Counseling Services designed to inform and aid District Latino residents to maintain or secure affordable housing. OLA's Outreach staff responded to over 50 constituent, Neighborhood Services, and community service agency complaints relating to housing issues such as evictions, nuisance properties, public safety and property re-development.

Wards 1 and 4 have experienced the displacement of low income residents due to new developments and building purchases and renovations. OLA staff, in collaboration with the Mayor's Office on Community Affairs, the office of Councilmember Jim Graham, Housing Counseling Services and CARECEN fielded questions and complaints from tenants seeking to buy their buildings. By linking tenant groups to housing advocacy and assistance agencies, OLA is able to facilitate partnerships between community groups and tenant organizations, and involve the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs and Department of Housing and Community Development in addressing routine as well as serious housing issues.

As part of these efforts OLA's Outreach team, in conjunction with Neighborhood Services' teams in Wards 1 and 4, conducted a number of visits to rental buildings and personal residences identified as "nuisance properties". OLA staff facilitated the participation of limited English proficient tenants in their own defense, having been accused of housing code infractions. OLA provided further services such as information in Spanish on tenant rights and responsibilities, and referrals to government and nonprofit services geared toward improving the tenants' standard of living.

The Outreach team participated in Neighborhood Services' "Fight Backs," which bring together many District government agencies to distribute informational materials and to investigate housing violations and human service needs. Staff attended one to two Fight Backs each month in Wards 1 and 4 and conducted follow up on every case, to make sure tenants are receiving the needed services.

OLA conducted two housing events in partnership with the Office of Human Rights, the Department of Housing and Community Development and community based organizations such as Change, Inc., Housing Counseling Services, LEDC and Manna, Inc. Staff, presenters, and exhibitors shared information on tenant rights, tenant organizing, first-time home buyer programs, and loan and closing cost assistance.

OLA and CARECEN worked together to advocate on behalf of Latinos in the District of Columbia for the creation of an Office of Tenant Advocacy within the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs. Both organizations testified before the City Council's Committee on Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, chaired by Councilmember Jim Graham.

OLA helped DHCD, BB&T Bank, and Freddie Mac organize the unveiling of the Financial Literacy Bus that offers services tailored to limited English proficient consumers who want to purchase their own home.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In fiscal year 2005, the Latino Economic Development Corporation (LEDC), FIDMi, (International Migrants Development Fund), the Ibero American Chamber of Commerce, the Carlos Rosario International Career Center, and the Local Food Alliance received a total of \$185,000 to deliver services that address the economic development of individuals and businesses. LEDC and FIDMi worked to increase participants' financial literacy and familiarity with banking and basic financial management in the United States. These agencies offered numerous seminars to educate clients about loans, credit, and home buying. The Ibero American Chamber of Commerce developed and executed an outreach program targeted at 60 Latino businesses in Ward 1 in order to provide extensive business development seminars and one-on-one technical assistance. The Carlos Rosario International Career Center used its grant funds to develop a specialized and skilled health industry employment training program for Latino residents, to be launched in the fall of 2006.

OLA facilitated meetings and established partnerships with the Georgia Avenue Business Resource Center, the Latino Economic Development Corporation, the Ibero American Chamber of Commerce, and Howard University's Small Business Development Center. OLA conducted targeted outreach to local Latino-owned businesses on the services offered by each of these agencies. OLA collaborated with the Office of the Clean City, Department of Public Works and Department of Transportation in their efforts to inform the Latino community by translating informational materials geared toward beautification and compliance with trash and recycling laws that lead to enhanced access to Latino businesses and avoidance of fines.

OLA linked the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration (ABRA) with the Latino Economic Development Corporation to arrange for the distribution of information to the Latino business community regarding licenses to sell alcoholic beverages in restaurants, bars, or stores. OLA reviewed the translation into Spanish and distributed announcements for ABRA's training sessions to obtain Class A, B, C, and D licenses. These licenses are for the retail sale of beer and wine for off or on premises consumption. They apply to restaurant, grocery stores, bars or any other establishment that might sell alcoholic beverages.

EMPLOYMENT

Andromeda Transcultural Health, the ARRIBA Center for Independent Living, the Carlos Rosario International Career Center, the Life Skills Center, Multicultural Community Service, Neighbors' Consejo, the Spanish Catholic Center, and Second Chance Employment Services received a total of \$477,000 to deliver programs to train their participants for specific types of work or to prepare and help their clients find work. These programs offered services to over 500 people, including training for certification in food handling, as computer service technicians or medical assistants. The programs were supplemented with computer skills training, English language instruction, and sessions on career counseling and placement.

OLA has worked continuously to identify and inform the Latino community regarding employment opportunities and recruit qualified individuals to apply for these jobs. OLA's Outreach team, in partnership with government agencies, worked to educate frontline workers and case managers on strategies to inform the Latino community about employment opportunities. In fiscal year 2005, the Outreach team assisted federal and District government agencies with outreach and bilingual employee recruitment for the following types of jobs:

- Bilingual Census takers for the US Census Bureau, through the DC Office of Planning
- Childcare providers for the Department of Human Services
- Summer youth employment opportunities for the Department of Parks and Recreation
- Government and community jobs through the Ward 4 Neighborhood Services Employment Fair.

In addition, OLA assisted in providing campaigns on immigration, employee rights and work opportunities, in collaboration with The Family Place and the Department of Employment Services (DOES).

OLA's Language Access Coordinator joined the Council of Latino Agencies in sponsoring and running targeted job fairs to fill bilingual employee vacancies at the Department of Health and the Income Maintenance Administration in the Department of Human Services. OLA, along with OAPIA, sponsored and guided marketing for a targeted job fair to fill 25 bilingual positions for 911 and 311 services in the Office of Unified Communications (OUC). OUC is a portal for constituents to the Police and Fire and Emergency Medical Services (FEMS), and it is imperative that these agencies have language capability to attend to non-English speaking District residents in cases of emergencies, many of which are of life or death situation. OLA urged DC agencies to recruit bilingual candidates during the Latino Family Fair and coordinated with DOES and the DC Office of Personnel (DCOP) to provide human resources support. The mobile One-Stop bus was present at OLA's Family Fair to help Latino fairgoers apply for employment or other DOES services on the spot.

OLA also assisted DOES throughout the year by translating ten documents and providing a voice-over in Spanish for an informational unemployment insurance presentation that runs on the DOES website. OLA performed quality control on the translations contracted by DOES with outside vendors, and distributed announcements to its network of Language Access Coordinators and community groups for the baseball vendor job fair at RFK Stadium and for the DC Career Expo. Finally, OLA translated job descriptions for Electrician and Tree Trimmer for the DC Department of Transportation.

OLA advocated for and achieved that DOES support FEMS in its effort to create a paramedic training program for bilingual Emergency Medical personnel, to start next year.

OLA has worked extensively with DC Office of Personnel (DCOP) on a variety of issues regarding employment. OLA and the Office of Human Rights proposed, and the Director of DCOP accepted, setting up a language proficiency assessment tool, housed in the Center for Workforce Development, to objectively identify the language skills of current and future District government employees. This tool will be a model for other municipalities and state governments to follow. It enhances the provisions of the Language Access Act by determining the level of proficiency a current or future bilingual employee has in a language other than English. When a government agency advertises a bilingual vacancy, it can be assured, through this assessment, that the employee's linguistic proficiency meets the agency's needs. This project will be carried out in conjunction with OAPIA and the Language Access Director, in the Office of Human Rights. OLA also secured that DCOP advertise the Citywide Job Fair in Spanish language newspapers.

OLA has worked with the DCOP and the Office of the Chief Technology Officer to incorporate bilingual search capabilities to the District's employment opportunities internet site. The site can be reached through OLA's webpage at www.ola.dc.gov, through DCOP's site at www.dcop.dc.gov, or by visiting the District's general internet portal at www.dc.gov.

VI. Conclusion

Overall, OLA has fulfilled its mandate in fiscal year 2005 and successfully met or surpassed all its performance measures. Leadership is stable, and awareness of OLA's expertise and reliability has become widely apparent and very fruitful to community groups and government peers. OLA is a highly effective consultant on Latino issues for the Mayor, City Council, and government entities. OLA continues to serve as a steadfast vehicle through which the Latino community and the Mayor's Latino Commission can channel policy, agency and program recommendations.

During 2005, the Mayor's Latino Community Development Commission submitted to Mayor Williams a list of recommendations on four critical areas for policy and program improvement: 1) health; 2) youth violence and gang prevention; 3) affordable housing; and 4) appointment of Latinos(as) and bilingual people to all levels of government positions. With support from OLA, the Commission engaged in a planning process that included, at one of the meetings, the participation of the Mayor. Mayor Williams is committed to fulfilling these recommendations during his last year in office, and has praised the Commission members for their foresight and commitment to improving the lives of District residents. In fiscal year 2006, OLA plans to follow through the recommendations by engaging government officials in developing action steps that are immediate and feasible. The Commission plans to report back to the Mayor on the next steps in the near future.

OLA is ready to address the changing needs of the rapidly growing Latino community and to collaborate with Mayor Anthony Williams in his on-going efforts to infuse systemic change in our local government and nationwide. Thanks to its unique position, OLA has improved community relations, extended the Mayor's messages, provided detailed and up-to-date information and brokered discussions which have led to improving the quality of life of the District's Latino community. Moving forward, OLA's Strategic Business Plan will continue its strong course. OLA is ready to enter into new partnerships in 2006 and foster new initiatives that lead to solutions with stakeholders across community and government.